FORGOTTEN TONGUE

AND OTHER STORIES

Gwandah Christopher

Swift Books

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…dedicated to my parents and those interested in fictional works.

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— Gwandah Christopher

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this remarkable book *Forgotten Tongue & Other Stories* by the talented writer, Gwandah Christopher. As the head of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Sa'adu Zungur University Bauchi, I have had the privilege of witnessing Gwandah Christopher's growth as a storyteller and his unique ability to craft engaging narratives that resonate with readers.

This collection of stories explores the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in a rapidly changing world. Through vivid narratives, the author delves into the heart of human experiences, highlighting the enduring power of cultural identity, the challenges of navigating love and betrayal, and the search for meaning in a shifting landscape.

The stories are set against a backdrop of vibrant African communities, where ancient customs and traditions intertwine with the pressures of globalization. In "Audu's Legacy: The Revival of Mundi's Culture," the author showcases the resilience of a community striving to reclaim its cultural heritage, demonstrating the powerful role of tradition in fostering a sense of belonging and identity. The village's successful celebration of Mundi's cultural heritage, a testament to their collective efforts, resonates with the broader theme of cultural preservation, a crucial endeavor in a world increasingly dominated by homogenizing forces.

The collection also explores the complexities of human relationships, particularly in the realm of love. "Turmoil of Love" grapples with the tangled web of emotions that often accompany romantic

entanglements. Maureen's complicated predicament, torn between four suitors, presents a nuanced exploration of love, betrayal, and the challenging realities of navigating complex relationships in a social context rife with gossip and speculation.

Throughout the collection, Gwandah employs rich imagery and engaging dialogue to bring the characters and their struggles to life. Through their stories, the author invites readers to contemplate the enduring power of community, the fragility of tradition in a rapidly changing world, and the complexities of human relationships. "Forgotten Tongue and Other Stories" is a captivating exploration of the human condition, leaving the reader with thought-provoking insights into the enduring power of cultural heritage and the intricate tapestry of human experience.

I am certain that readers will find themselves captivated by Gwandah's storytelling prowess and deeply moved by the truths he uncovers in these pages. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone who appreciates the power of a well-told story and the profound impact it can have on our lives.

— Ado Ahmed Mohammed, PhD
HoD (Department of English and Literary Studies)
Sa'adu Zungur University, Bauchi.

PREFACE

A Forgotten Tongue and Other Stories is a collection of tales that have been simmering in my mind and heart for years. Within these pages, you will find stories that explore the intricacies of human emotions, the complexities of relationships, and the power of resilience in the face of adversity. Each story is a labour of love, a piece of my soul, and I hope they resonate with you as much as they have with me.

The book's title holds special significance as it tackles social issues. It symbolises the idea of language as a means of expressing culture, identity, and human experience. In a fast-paced, ever-changing world, there is a danger of losing touch with one's roots and traditions and the stories that shape our identity as a distinctive nation. Through this collection, I have paid homage to the beauty of language, the richness of diverse cultures, and the importance of preserving our collective heritage.

— Gwandah Christopher

ONE

FORGOTTEN TONGUE

In the village of Zooro, nestled in a remote corner of the world, lived a young man named Polmi. In Zooro, the people communicated solely in their indigenous language (Sahng), holding fast to their cultural heritage. However, Polmi, with a vision for change and a desire for broader horizons, embarked on a journey to reshape his life and community.

One morning, Polmi stood before his father, his eyes filled with determination as he tried to explain his decision to go to the city.

Father: Polmi, why do you insist on leaving our village? Zooro is your home, where you belong. What could the city possibly offer you?
Polmi: Father, I appreciate all that Zooro has given me, but I want to explore new opportunities and see what lies beyond our borders. I can learn and grow in the city in ways I can't here.
Father: But the city is a dangerous and unfamiliar place. What if something happens to you? How will you survive without the support of our community?
Polmi: I understand your concerns, Father; I have thought long and hard about this. I promise to be cautious and make wise decisions. I want to make you proud and show you I can succeed, even in the city.
Father: It hurts me to see you go, Polmi. You are my son, my pride and joy. If you truly desire this, then I will not stand in your way. Just promise me that you will not forget your roots and will always carry the values of our village in your heart.
Polmi: Thank you, Father. I will never forget where I come from and will

always cherish the teachings and traditions of Zooro. I promise to return one day and share all I have learned with our community. Please trust me; I carry your love and support wherever I go.
Father: *(after a pause, his eyes filled with emotion)* Go then, Polmi. Chase your dreams and make us proud. Remember, no matter how far you travel, you will always have a home with us here in Zooro. Stay safe, my son, and may the spirits guide you on your journey.

After his father's permission, he set out for Abuja, the bustling city, where he encountered a world vastly different from his own. Polmi navigated the challenges of city life and eventually found employment as a gateman.

Over the years, Polmi adapted to city life, learning new languages and customs. The new languages he was exposed to were Pidgin English and Mbagi. He spent a decade in the city without having someone to communicate with in his native language. After spending years in the city, Polmi realised that it was essential to visit his village and remembered what his father told him when he was going to the city: that he should always remember his roots.

In the morning, after making all the necessary arrangements to leave the city, to the village, Polmi embarked on his journey back to Zooro to spend his holiday. As Polmi returned to Zooro after a decade in the city, he was surrounded by villagers eager to hear about his experience. All the villagers gathered at the traditional square to welcome him. He stood full of joy and greeted them in their indigenous language:

Polmi: Sandhakioo! (*The villagers responded in chorus)*
Villagers: Sannu nabooo! Welcome too.
Polmi: I had such a great time in Abuja. (*Polmi exclaimed in English, his voice carrying a hint of pride.)*

The villagers looked at each other in confusion, trying to understand his words. Hearing the unfamiliar language, they exchanged puzzled glances before one finally spoke up.

Villagers: Nine' ki' Kwa,ne'? *(What are you saying?)* (*The villagers shouted in their native tongue.)*

Realising his mistake, Polmi quickly switched back to his mother tongue, but he stumbled over a few words, struggling to find the correct phrases. His once fluent speech now sounded awkward and forced, starkly contrasting his conversation in the city. Yet, his newfound knowledge and skills also brought admiration from his fellow villagers, who marvelled at his confidence and demeanour, and felt a sense of pride and inspiration in his achievements.

Two days after Polmi returned to the village, some of his friends decided to follow him to the city because they saw how he helped his family and met their needs. Ambima, Matui, and Dhndah were the first people who expressed interest in following Polmi to the city.

Early in the morning on Tuesday, they went to Polmi's house. When they arrived, they greeted each other and began to express their purpose for the visit.

Ambima: Polmi, we have heard of your adventures in the city, and we are intrigued. We want to experience what you have experienced and see the world beyond our village.
Matui: Yes, Polmi. Your stories have ignited a fire in us to seek new opportunities and broaden our horizon. We want to learn new languages, meet new people, and explore city life.
Dhndah: I have always dreamed of venturing beyond Zooro's borders, and now, with you as our guide, Polmi, I believe we can make that dream a reality. Please take us with you on your next journey to the city.
Polmi: I am humbled by your trust in me. I understand your desire for new experiences and would happily have you join me in the city. The transition may be challenging, but I will do my best to help you adapt and succeed in the new environment.
Ambima: Thank you, Polmi. We are ready to take on this new chapter and see what the world offers. Lead the way, and we will follow you with open hearts and eager minds.
Matui: Yes, Polmi. We trust in your guidance and wisdom. Together, we will embark on this journey and embrace the unknown with courage

and determination, knowing that we are in good hands.
Dhndah: Polmi, thank you for this opportunity. We are grateful for your friendship and for showing us a path to a brighter future. Let's make our village proud and carry our traditions with us as we embrace the city.

After they left, on the same day, ten villagers showed interest in following Polmi to the city. After one week, Polmi, Ambima, Matui, Dhandah, and the ten villagers journeyed to the city. Their departure marked the beginning of a shift in the village, as exposure to the outside world led to changes in language use and cultural practices.

Meanwhile, a week after their journey, King Maina died and a new king was elected. The new king, King Jarma, was an educated man and full of intelligence. King Jarma knew the importance of education and encouraged the villagers to pursue learning. Under his leadership, many villagers received education and became proficient in multiple languages, including English.

However, as education and exposure to the city increased, the use of indigenous languages began to decline in Zooro. The villagers, eager to adapt to the changing world, embraced the borrowed language at the expense of their native tongue.

Ultimately, both villages faced the challenge of balancing tradition with modernity. Their Language and culture were at risk of being lost to modern influences.

THREE

MARY AND MAGDALENA

In Zandiko, Mary and Magdalena were more than just friends, they were like sisters. From their early school days to adulthood, they shared an unbreakable bond. Their friendship was a source of love, support, and unwavering loyalty.

Despite facing life's challenges, Mary and Magdalena stood by each other's side, navigating the ups and downs with resilience and determination. Their friendship was built on a foundation of trust and understanding, a bond that transcended words and stood the test of time.

However, as they entered their final year of school, their friendship was tested when a suitor named Yusuf attempted to come between them. Yusuf, engaged to Mary, deceitfully began sending messages to Magdalena, professing his love for her and sowing seeds of doubt and confusion.

Magdalena,
I cannot stop thinking about you. Your beauty and kindness captivate me more than words can express. I am engaged to Mary, but my heart yearns for you. Can we meet tomorrow to discuss this further?
@Yusuf

Yusuf,
I am shocked and appalled by your words. How dare you betray Mary and try to come between us? Our friendship means more to me than any

fleeting feelings you may have. I will not meet with you, and I suggest you cease this foolishness before it destroys everything you hold dear.
@Magdalena

Despite Yusuf's manipulative tactics, Magdalena remained loyal to her friend, refusing to betray Mary's trust by revealing the messages. However, when Yusuf's intentions became clear, Magdalena took matters into her own hands, recording their conversations and gathering evidence of his deceit. On the eve of Yusuf's birthday, as the sun began to set, nervous excitement filled the air at the village square. The tables were adorned with flickering candles, and laughter and music echoed through the cobblestone streets. Mary and Magdalena stood side by side, their bond stronger than ever as they awaited Yusuf's arrival.

Yusuf approached, a glint of anticipation in his eyes as he made his way toward Magdalena. Mary glanced at her friend, a question lingering in her gaze as Yusuf knelt before Magdalena, holding a small velvet box.

Yusuf: Magdalena, my love, I cannot imagine my life without you by my side. Will you do me the honour of being my wife?
Magdalena's heart sank as she remembered the deceitful messages, the betrayal lurking beneath Yusuf's words. She hesitated, her eyes flickering with uncertainty as she glanced at Mary, who stood silently but steadfastly beside her.

Magdalena: Yusuf, before I give you an answer, there's something you should know.
Yusuf's brow furrowed in confusion as Magdalena pulled out her phone, displaying the incriminating messages between them for all to see. Mary's jaw clenched in anger as she witnessed the deceit before them.

Magdalena: You thought you could come between us, Yusuf, but true friendship cannot be broken by deceit. Mary means more to me than any fleeting feelings you may have.

Yusuf's face paled, his eyes wide with disbelief as the truth of his betrayal sank in. He tried to speak, to explain, but his words were brushed aside as Mary and Magdalena turned to walk away, leaving Yusuf kneeling on the ground, his world crashing down around him.

The village square fell silent, flickering candles cast long shadows as Mary and Magdalena walked away, their friendship more vital than ever in the face of adversity. At that moment, the power of genuine connection and unwavering loyalty shone bright, a beacon of hope in the darkness of betrayal.

FOUR

A BOLD ESCAPE

In the bustling town of Kururu, where they grew up, Ishaku and Mbima found love in the most unlikely places. Despite their different backgrounds —she was from a wealthy Christian family, and he was from a humble background—they shared a bond that transcended societal expectations.

Their love blossomed in secrecy, hidden from disapproving eyes and judgmental whispers. As they approached adulthood, the pressure to conform to their families' wishes weighed heavily on their hearts.

When they were to get married, Ishaku and Mbima knew their families would never approve of their union. Despite their love, the chasm between their social statuses seemed insurmountable, threatening to tear them apart.

Faced with opposition from their families and the community, Ishaku and Mbima tried to stay away from each other, but their hearts refused to obey. They continued to meet secretly, clinging to the hope that love would conquer all.

As the pressure mounted, Mbima's father sought a suitable match for her, arranging introductions with a wealthy suitor named Mr. Chocks. Despite her reservations, Mbima obeyed her family's wishes, silently enduring their plans for her future.

On the morning of her wedding, Mbima felt a sense of dread and anxiety creeping into her heart. As she looked at herself in the mirror,

dressed in the elaborate wedding gown her parents chose, she couldn't shake the feeling of suffocation and despair.

The sound of festivities outside only served to amplify her inner turmoil. The music, the laughter and the bustling of preparations, all felt like a mockery of her true desires. As she tried to compose herself, Mbima felt a fire igniting within her, a determination to break free from the chains that bound her.

As the time approached for her to walk down the aisle, Mbima's heart raced with conflicting emotions. She knew that rejecting Mr. Chocks, the wealthy suitor, would defy her family's expectations and invite their wrath, but she also knew that her heart belonged to Ishaku, and no amount of societal pressure could change that.

Standing at the wedding hall's threshold, surrounded by guests and well-wishers, Mbima felt a surge of courage coursing through her veins. With a deep breath, she turned to her parents and the suitor awaiting her at the altar, and in a clear, unwavering voice, she spoke her truth.

“I cannot do this," she declared, her voice ringing out with defiance. "I cannot marry him. My heart belongs to another, and I will not sacrifice my happiness for appearances.”

Shock and disbelief swept through the room as Mbima's words hung in the air, challenging the foundations of tradition and expectation. Her parents' faces turned white with anger and disappointment while the suitor looked on with confusion and indignation.

Mbima stood her ground, her eyes shining with determination and conviction. With Ishaku at her side, she took a step forward, leaving behind the life planned for her and embracing the uncertain, but promising future ahead. As she walked away from the wedding hall, hand in hand with Ishaku, Mbima felt a sense of liberation and empowerment wash over her. At that moment, she knew she had made the right choice, following her heart and choosing love over duty.

As they disappeared into the night, leaving behind the chaos and confusion of the wedding day, Ishaku and Mbima's love shone brighter than ever, a beacon of hope and defiance in the face of adversity.

Together, Ishaku and Mbima embarked on a journey of love and freedom, starting a new life in a distant town where they could be together without fear or judgment. They found solace and strength in each other's arms, forging a bond that would withstand any obstacle.

Their escape was not just an act of rebellion—it was a declaration of their unwavering love, a testament to the power of love to defy social norms and expectations.

As they began their new life as husband and wife, Ishaku and Mbima knew their journey would not be easy. But with love as their compass and each other as their anchor, they were ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead, knowing that together, they could overcome anything.